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Nov. 24, 2024

Scripture: Psalm 146

Sermon Title: Christ the King

Prayer...

Introduction:

Today is Christ the King Sunday, which is the Sunday each year where we especially remember that our allegiance as Christians is to Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church.

This morning I have chosen Psalm 146 as our Scripture text because it reminds us to put our hope in the Lord rather than to put our trust in princes. One of our mission partners, Bob Ekblad wrote a devotion using Psalm 146 recently. His devotion was short and to the point, so I want to read it to you. This is what Bob said earlier this month on Nov. 5th, election day.

“Today as US citizens vote in a stressful election, Psalm 146 rings especially true, reminding us here (and everywhere) of the higher

spiritual realities-- inviting us to re-orient our allegiance and priorities to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish.

How blessed is the person whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever.

Who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous; The Lord protects the strangers; He

supports the fatherless and the widow, but he thwarts the way of the wicked [the rich and powerful].

The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the Lord!"

Bob's advice for us to look to Psalm 146 was valuable on election day and it remains valuable post-election as we prepare for a transition in power.

The political season is interesting because we are encouraged to choose sides and to show allegiance to a political party and to show animosity towards the other party.

Psalm 146 suggests that putting our hope in political leadership or overly directing our allegiance to the government of either the United States or any other country is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As followers of Jesus, we show allegiance to our Savior and Lord.

Politics are important in this world, but our hope ultimately is in God.

What is beautiful about Psalm 146 is that it lays out God's priorities.

God's priorities are to care for the oppressed. He cares about feeding the hungry. He cares about bringing freedom to prisoners, which by the way is part of the ministry of Bob and Gracie Ekblad, our mission partners. They visit prisoners in Burlington area of Washington state and have a special heart to care for immigrants who are in prison. The Lord watches over the strangers. Let us remember once again in Scripture that strangers include immigrants and refugees. Psalm 146 goes on to say that God cares for the fatherless, the widows and the orphans.

One sad bit of news this last week was that Tony Campolo, well known public speaker, teacher, and writer passed away. I met Tony once many years ago at Seattle Pacific University. I grew up being inspired by his Christian faith and his encouragement to live one's faith by caring for the poor. There is a quote of Tony's that was shared on facebook a lot this week. Here are the words...

“Jesus never says to the poor: ‘come find the church’, but he says to those of us in the church: ‘go into the world and find the poor, hungry, homeless, imprisoned.” — Tony Campolo

These are the causes that God has for us on this Christ the King Sunday. We need continue to care for the poor, hungry, homeless, and imprisoned and we need to be wary of putting our allegiance towards anyone other than Jesus Christ.

Now that the election is over, it is not a time to become passive about the needs of the world. It is a time to follow Jesus, who is the best example of leadership. We can join Jesus in prioritizing the poor and oppressed, lifting up the vulnerable, caring for the ecological health of the planet, working to make our food sources organic and healthy, removing unnecessary pesticides from our farming practices. We can care for refugees and immigrants. We can thoughtfully engage our media sources and foster peace and

understanding instead of division and fear. There is much work to be done and Jesus is our King.

Friends, the kingdom of God is centered on care for the vulnerable not accumulating material wealth or supporting actions of violence.

It is the way of peace, which is why our Savior chose peace rather than violence.

During my time in Louisville, Kentucky, at the recent Moderator's conference I had the privilege to meet local pastors and elders from all around the country who are serving many different presbyteries.

One pastor who especially impressed me was a guy named Ben Daniel. Ben is pastor of Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, CA.

Ben's church is part of the Presbyterian Peace Church Fellowship movement. Here is what his church says about their commitment to peace.

“There are many wonderful and wonderfully-effective

secular organizations that do good work in the cause for peace, but Montclair Presbyterian Church entered into this conversation because churches have a unique voice and draw from the deep wells of spiritual traditions. By employing its singular articulation of ancient wisdom, the church is able to remind both its members and the broader community that peacemaking is integral to our quest to achieve our fuller humanity.

In its work of peacemaking, the Church is responsive, prophetic, and sacramental. The response is in relation to God's calling us and all humanity to work for reconciliation and peacemaking.”

A Peacemaking Church like Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, CA sounds like a wonderful way to live out the kingdom of God in our world.

I wonder if Newberg First Presbyterian Church might want to be a Peace Church as well some day. Being a Peace Church would certainly align with the heart of Christ and it would also make sense given our Quaker roots here in Newberg. Being a Peace Church would fit well with our Peace Garden and our new Center for Christian Spirituality. Pastor Ben Daniel has asked if we are interested in joining the Peace movement, so I will learn more and let you know what that might involve.

Friends, Christ the King Sunday is a good time for us to recommit to both peacemaking and to our care for the most vulnerable in our world.

There has been a trend in the Presbyterian Church USA and other Christian denominations to sometimes change the word Kingdom to

Kin-dom as a way to highlight that following Jesus involves supporting the whole family of God and to care for each other as siblings or kin within the family of God.

Whether we remember that Jesus is King or that we are kin to one another, this day is an invitation to put our trust in God, not in princes or even presidents. May God guide us in our faithful worship and faithful allegiance to the King of Kings, Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN and AMEN.

Psalm 146

Praise for God's Help

1 Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

3 Do not put your trust in princes,

in mortals, in whom there is no help.

4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth;

on that very day their plans perish.

5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord their God,

6 who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith forever;

7 who executes justice for the oppressed;

who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

8 the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

9 The Lord watches over the strangers;

he upholds the orphan and the widow,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

10 The Lord will reign forever,

your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord!